



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OSCE GENDER ACTION PLAN

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 23 July 2020

Mr. Chair,

We thank the acting Secretary General, Ambassador Tuula Yrjölä, for her presentation of the Special Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality.

Last year, in reviewing the progress of implementation of the Gender Action Plan, we had to recognise what was then the disappointing state of affairs of implementation. After 15 years, we had yet fully to implement the Gender Action Plan. While important in our context, the Action Plan is hardly among the most ambitious and should have been implemented long ago. While some recent efforts are cause for optimism, the full implementation of the action plan remains elusive, now after 16 years.

The 2020 report covers the last three years and is prepared for the upcoming Gender Equality Review Conference. However, the Permanent Council is to review the annual implementation, and we will therefore mostly be concerned with the year on year progress in today's review.

As reported, it is welcome that OSCE executive structures have “significantly advanced institutional policies and structures to accelerate the attainment of gender parity and gender equality”. We also welcome that of the 16 field operations the number with their own gender action plans have increased from 8 to 13 since 2016. All OSCE structures

should have exemplary gender equality practices that are also reflected in the outcomes of their recruitment. The increase in numbers of women should reach beyond the shortlist.

The reported advancements of policies and structures have yet to bring results where it matters the most. As last year, the percentage of women in senior management remains approximately the same as ten years ago, hovering around 30 percent. While numbers may vary slightly from year to year, the trend appears clear: Since the high water mark of OSCE gender balance in 2015, at a disappointing 35 percent, the percentage of women in senior management has decreased. At least today, women fill marginally more, rather than marginally less, than one in five positions among the Heads of Missions and Institutions. Marginal improvement is improvement, but we expect more.

While much was made of the Gender Parity Strategy for 2019 to 2026 last year, results appear long in coming. Moreover, gender parity is not sufficient for gender equality. Equality goes beyond mere numbers. It requires a conducive working environment, both physically and psychologically. It requires that we adapt our values and our mind-sets, and develop inclusive processes and incentives that benefit women as much as they do men. We should do all we can to recruit more women, but the lack of gender parity is not the reason we are not doing better. Most managers in the OSCE are men, and men must do more to bring gender equality forward.

The Gender Action Plan prescribed the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all activity, which would include all OSCE projects. How have we been doing? The number of projects with no mainstreaming continues to be low. This is good, but the same section of the report includes a puzzling statement: It is claimed that the increase from 51 percent to 58 percent of projects that include some mainstreaming is due to measures to ensure the participation of women in OSCE activities.

The numbers do not seem to support this conclusion, because the lion's share of the increase, from 53 percent to 58 percent from 2018 to 2019, is fully explained by the corresponding decrease in fully mainstreamed and targeted projects. Thus, the measures appear to have contributed to an increase of merely two points from 2017 to 2018. The further increase is explained by the reduction in projects ranked higher on gender mainstreaming. This is not impressive. We should be able to do better.

The report should be clearer on reasons why we have, or have not, achieved progress. Being clearer about this gives us the opportunity to learn about which measures work most effectively to bring about results. The findings should also be presented so that

they can easily be compared across structures. That way both states and other structures may better learn from the experiences of others.

We do not doubt that many OSCE staff and mission members, as well as managers, see the value of gender equality and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective, but we also know that many do not. The OSCE must ensure that everyone understands the contribution of gender mainstreaming to achieving the mission and larger objectives of the OSCE. Together we must strive to make the OSCE a better place for women as well as men, and ensure that every effort takes into consideration the needs of women as well as men. Then we could begin to see more concrete advances on gender equality within the OSCE.

Thank you